

City of Ellsworth
1 City Hall Plaza, Ellsworth, ME 04605
ARBOR COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
Monday, November 6, 2023, 8:15-9:15 AM

MINUTES

Members Present: Chair Tabatha White, Vice Chair Mary Blackstone, Jay Barnes, Teresa Davis, Iain Drummond, Casey Hanson (Councillor), Jamie Lambert, Sandy Walczyk

Member Regrets: Albert Harmon, Amy Reisman

Staff Present: Maura Condon, Elizabeth Ouellette, Toni Dyer

1. **Call to Order and Introductions:** Elizabeth Ouellette, Assistant City Planner was introduced. It was noted that because of the need to set up for the election in Council Chambers on Tuesday this meeting must be limited to one hour. In future the Commission may meet for two hours, but staff will only be available to meet for the first hour.
2. **Adoption of Minutes of October 2, 2023:** Moved Davis/Drummond that the minutes be adopted. Unanimously approved.
3. **Review and Approval of Remote Participation Policy** (see policy attached)
Moved Walczyk/Lambert that the policy be approved. Unanimously approved.
4. **Approval of the Commission's regular meeting time.** Moved Hanson/Davis that the Arbor Commission meet regularly at 8:15AM on the first Monday of each month (moved to the second Monday when the first Monday falls on a holiday). Unanimously approved.
5. **Staff Clarifications** (M. Condon, T. Dyer, E. Ouellette)
 - a. **Use of Google.docs for Commission work**
The City cannot set up a drive for us, but we can set up a drive for ourselves. It needs to be understood that the public can request information found on this google.docs site at any time, so there should be nothing personal or 'conversational' in nature such as comments.
Subcommittees and small groups less than the size of a quorum can work on their own and meet to discuss. The Commission may also set up special meetings to undertake work. "Reasonable notice of meeting" must be publicly posted, but there are no specific timelines for this.
 - b. **Answers to questions arising from Review of the City's Forestry Initiatives**

—What is the current scope of tree and related landscaping work undertaken by the City?

The Public Works department and the current Tree Warden (the City Manager) currently

handle basic emergency clean-up and see that blow downs or dangerous trees are removed. M. Blackstone noted that the Public Works Department would be going into their third year of a commitment to water trees that were planted on High St. in the context of the Ellsworth Garden Club's Project Canopy Grant. NewLand (Dr. Greenleaf) began the first year of a three-year contract in 2023 to do basic clean-up of City maintained parks and green spaces.

—What is the amount of the budget allocated for this work?

It is unclear what the budget set aside by the Public Works Department may have been.

T. Dyer said that she would follow up further on this.

The new Facilities Director will inherit the three-year \$39,000 contract with NewLand.

This is not for beautification, but rather for basic clean up/park maintenance.

T. White noted that not all of this work is necessarily associated with tree work.

There is a small amount of funds associated with Heart of Ellsworth downtown landscaping that was not used this year. It can be encumbered for use in the next budget year.

M. Blackstone noted that the City needs to spend a certain amount of money on a per capita basis on tree related work for it to qualify for Tree City USA status. It would appear that the City is meeting this amount currently, but it needs to be aware of this as it develops its budget. Substantial commitments by non-profits have contributed to its qualification in the past, but those commitments have finite time lines.

—Who is responsible for doing the work and what is the nature of any related contracts?

Staff will provide a copy of the current contract with NewLand. In future we can make recommendations to the City re content of contracts, expected standards, etc.

—What have been the expectations associated with maintenance and landscaping projects?

Unclear that the contract many specifics re standards or expectations.

—What City departments and staff members are responsible for overseeing tree/landscape planting and maintenance?

City Manager (tree warden), Public Works, Planning Departments have previously been responsible. The new Facilities Director will be in charge in future.

6. Member Comments—None. T. Dyer mentioned that it may be best to place this agenda item at end of the agenda.

7. Citizen Comments—None.

8. Communication to City Council re future appointment of Tree Warden--

T. White read out State expectations for cities that do not have Conservation Commissions to appoint one or more tree wardens to oversee preservation of trees.

The Commission wishes to request of City Council that upon the hiring of a new City Manager (who is currently also appointed as Tree Warden) a certified arborist be appointed to fulfill the role of Tree Warden. The Commission will be happy to assist the City in the selection of an individual who has the necessary qualifications.

In revising Chapter 43: The Tree Ordinance, the Commission will provide guidelines for credentials, responsibilities and duties for future tree wardens. It is currently reviewing similar guidelines and ordinances for other communities. S. Walczyk volunteered to review guidelines for Tree Wardens in other communities such as Bangor.

The Commission will bring this matter forward in the context of its City budget input, but for the November City Council meeting Councillor Hanson will provide a heads-up report on this matter.

T. White will set up a google drive so that people can begin working on this and other revisions to the Tree Ordinance.

9. Preparation/Presentation of Input to Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee—

E. Ouellette reported that the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee is just moving into the visioning stage of its work. January 22 (5:30PM) would be a good time for the Arbor Commission to do a presentation to the Steering Committee. There are two chapters of the plan that will be especially relevant for the Arbor Commission: the Natural Resources chapter and the Agriculture and Forestry Chapter. Timelines for the plan anticipate that its chapters will be coming out in late summer, so the Commission should plan on providing feedback at that stage prior to the projected completion of the plan in October 2024.

For the January meeting, it was suggested that the Commission come with a presentation relating to a) where we are now and b) where we want to be that can lead to a discussion with the Steering Committee using our expertise to inform how we can best get from a) to b).

Everyone was encouraged to complete the comprehensive planning survey. You do not need to be an Ellsworth citizen to provide input.

10. Presentation to and/or joint meeting with Recreation Commission re Parks and Recreation Department—deferred to the next meeting

11. Appointment of Subcommittees and/or strategies for addressing the following:

a. Determining the focus for 2024 Project Canopy application(s)

First we need to get approval from Council for this application. M. Blackstone will provide information that C. Hanson can use at the next Council meeting to secure approval for an

application. Volunteers to work on this application are T. White, M. Blackstone and C. Hanson. We will also need to work with a staff person to put the application together.

b. Revision of Ellsworth's Tree Ordinance including the Tree warden job description

It will be important to begin by seeking out models from other communities. Volunteers to work on this are I. Drummond, J. Lambert and T. White.

c. Drafting a Forestry Management Plan for Ellsworth

Volunteers for this include M. Blackstone, T. Davis, S. Walczyk, J. Barnes, and T. White.

12. Review Current State of Community Forestry Initiatives (see attached summary)

This item was deferred to another meeting due to time limitations.

a. Green Ellsworth and its partner organizations (see attached summary)

b. Other non-profits and organizations

12. Review/augment Commission "To Do" list/ timeline—deferred.

Provide direction and support for Community Tree Nursery

(Upcoming work: winter prep & ordering for next spring)

Develop and request Arbor Day Proclamation

Complete application for Tree City USA renewal

Secure funds for baseline Canopy Coverage Assessment

Develop proposed budget for Arbor Commission/City Tree Planting 2024-2025

Develop plan for public engagement and education

Other ?

13. Adjournment. Moved Hanson/Davis

Current State of Community Tree Initiatives (Agenda Item #11)

City of Ellsworth:

Chapter 43—Tree Ordinance: https://www.ellsworthmaine.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/ord43_Trees.pdf

Appoints tree warden

Arbor Day Proclamations

Pruning/removal of tree hazards within public spaces and right of way

Replacement of city-owned street trees

Contribution of a tree to each of the two GE pilot projects

City crew assistance with pilot project planting including watering commitment through 2024

Contracted care of some public spaces

Oversees Tree Growth Tax Abatement program

Development/expansion/care of Branch Lake Public Forest (in partnership with FBC)

Green Ellsworth Tree-related Initiatives in Progress

Since 2017 Green Ellsworth and its partner organizations (the City of Ellsworth, Ellsworth Garden Club, Frenchman Bay Conservancy and the Hancock County Soil and Water Conservation District) have initiated a number of projects to preserve and strengthen Ellsworth's tree canopy—and in the process raise the profile of the importance of trees to the extent that the City would ultimately

appoint its Arbor Commission and provide more formal guidance to realize the vision communicated by its citizens in the green planning process. As with the entire Green Plan the tree sections of the Green Plan were intended to inform the current Comprehensive Planning process.

See the Green Plan Land Chapter at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1C6ntxHqvdyYd86RDpPhIFFD0KDGmMhWR/view>
esp. pp. 84-85, 101-103 and Recommendations L-21 through L-25

GE has initiated the following projects:

Tree City USA since 2022 (GE)

Inventory and basic landscape survey for Ellsworth's public green spaces; see
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PFd4DpBY8wOSiat_UkysQFdTVUp_Bw99/view. (GE)

Street tree survey work in progress/COA map (link). (GE)

Native tree and shrub sales and give aways (HCSWCD, EGC)

Community Tree Nursery at Jordan Homestead Preserve (GE, FBC, EGC)
180 trees planted; @100 more to be planted fall 2023; 80 more in spring 2024
with school and community volunteer participation during Maine Arbor Week

Forested land conservation: Jordan Homestead; Spindle Preserve; Whitney Forest+ (FBC)

Heirloom Tree ID, list, education and preservation (EGC)

Public Education/Programming (EGC, GE)

Two successful Project Canopy Grant Applications (GE, EGC, FBC)

Pilot Invasive species survey of River Walk (FBC, GE/EGC)

Pilot planting projects: City Hall Plaza, High Street

Draft Forestry management plan

Developing the beginnings of a citizen/volunteer group to assist with tree assessment and maintenance

Other non-profits and organizations

Maintenance of forested preserves and public spaces:

Birdsacre (Stanwood Wildlife Sanctuary)
Green Lake National Fish Hatchery (US Fish and Wildlife)
Meadowbrook Forest (Blue Hill Heritage Trust)
Mt. Calvary Cemetery (Catholic diocese)
Woodbine Cemetery (Woodbine Cemetery Association)
Woodlawn (Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations)